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 Homes & Property

Bring your home back to life with a fragrant garden



Like all other gardens, fragrant gardens need constant maintenance. They need to be fed, mulched, deadheaded and have any suckers from the rootstalks removed.

By Connie Nankya. ([email the author](#))

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In Summary

Although gardening for fragrance contributes significantly to the scent and ambience of one's home, it seems a new practice to the Ugandan community because most Ugandans do not consider landscaping their homes important.

It is amazing how fragrances can stir up one's senses. If you are interested in different scents, a fragrant garden would be a good idea, writes **Connie Nankya**.

“Scented plants are a great antidote to stress and are also known to enhance mental alertness and moods,” says Ritah Edopu, a lecturer at Makerere University School of Industrial and Fine Art specialising in painting, interior design and landscaping.

Although gardening for fragrance contributes significantly to the scent and ambience of one's home, it seems a new practice to the Ugandan community because most Ugandans do not consider landscaping their homes important. The majority only grow flowers for visual beauty. However, it makes sense to have a well done fragrant garden in a home.

How to grow one

According to Edopu, fragrant gardens are usually located in domestic premises although some hotels and restaurants with a garden setting have them too. She adds that they can be set up closer to the house, preferably near the window. “This allows one to enjoy the scent whether they are inside or outside their house. It is important to note that all fragrant plants attract insects, hence families with a history of allergies should reposition their gardens away from the house,” she advises.

Edopu states that although flowers usually contain an aromatic scent, not all plants and flowers emit a sweet scent. “Despite the fact that there are several groups or plants endowed with pleasing fragrances, only 10 groups in the flower world contain the ideal fragrance. Leaf fragrances are possessed by only four groups. The most famous of all the fragrant flowers is perhaps the rose group. This is followed by the violet group, aromatic group (which includes almond, vanilla, sweet-pea), lemon group (which has the verbena, evening primrose), heavy group (which consists of lilac, jonquil, lily-of-the-valley), fruit scented group (which has apricot, apple, orange) and honey groups (which have honey suckle).

In addition, the aromatic leaf groups include the mint group, camphor and eucalyptus group, sulphur groups (which have the onions, watercress, garlic) and turpentine group (rosemary). Fragrant bark groups include aromatic groups (like the cinnamon tree) and turpentine group (cedar trees),” Edopu says.

Edopu's adds that plants can be selected according to their aromatic and aesthetic qualities. In order to create a landscape appeal based on the plant's visual impact, one should consider the colour, leaf texture and growth. "The most fragrant plants to include in a garden will be roses (Rosaceae), Gardenias (Rubiaceae) and Jasmine (Oleaceae). However, it should be noted that hybridisation in the quest for brighter and bigger blooms has sapped many flowers of their scents; the price of this "improvement" has been made at the expense of the fragrance. This is why old fashioned plants such as wild roses, violets and common lilac are sought after by fragrance-loving gardeners, hence when building the garden, ensure to look out for these and also to put the growth rate at different seasons into consideration."

Mixing for a set purpose

Knowledge of which plants to grow is not all one needs to be acquainted with when making a garden. Planting and mixing them is another aspect that should be considered. Edopu clarifies that one's needs and preferences (depending on whether the garden is for culinary, fragrance purposes or both) can determine how the plants should be mixed.

Plants can be mixed according to their size, colour and texture. When planting, one should put plants with subtle fragrances close to the house while those with strong scents can be placed at a further distance. Although plants with soft scents like roses and shrubs can mingle, it is sometimes better to plant varying fragrances in separate areas. "One can also take advantage of the prevailing wind pattern when placing the plants. For example, if the wind blows primarily from one direction, one could plant upwind in a spot where the scents can float inside the house with the breeze," advises Edopu.

How to maintain the garden

"Like all other gardens, fragrant gardens need constant maintenance. They need to be fed, mulched, deadheaded and have any suckers from the rootstalks removed. They also need to be constantly watered and sprayed," says Edopu.

"One can also maintain a fragrant garden through multi-tasking. This could be done in the form of mixing garden herbs together with the plants. Garden herbs not only add foliage and fragrance to the garden, but also have culinary uses. Mint, rosemary and thyme for example are often used in the kitchen to flavour hundreds of different recipes. Sage, marjoram, dill and lemon balm would also be a great choice for fragrant herbs in one's garden." All the above mentioned plants can be found in some established nursery beds in Entebbe, Mukono, Kampala and alongside highways.